# SOME NOTES ON THE TIGA DAERAH AFFAIR; A LOCAL EVENT IN THE EARLY INDONESIAN REVOLUTION

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Proklamasi kemerdekaan memberi kemungkinan bagi munculnya berbagai macam reaksi sebagai akibat meledaknya aspirasi yang selama ini tertekan. Reaksi-reaksi tersebut tak selamanya sejalan dengan apa yang dicitakan dan diinginkan oleh pemimpin-pemimpin nasional. Salah satu dari reaksi yang keras ialah apa yang disebut *Peristiwa Tiga Daerah*, yang terjadi di Keresidenan Pekalongan, pada bulan-bulan pertama Proklamasi.

Peristiwa tersebut memperlihatkan di satu pihak gejala umum dari situasi pada bulan-bulan pertama revolusi kemerdekaan, dan di pihak lain beberapa karakteristik khusus dari daerah pesisir utara Jawa Tengah. Hal-hal yang umum ialah, (1) peranan pemuda dalam proses perobahan sosial, (2) pertentangan antara kelas priyayi dengan rakyat biasa, (3) kurangnya komunikasi antara pemerintah daerah dan pusat, antara daerah dan daerah, dan antara golongan dengan golongan. Hal-hal khusus daerah ialah, (1) tidakkan *mendaulat* yang dilakukan terhadap golongan pangreh-praja, (2) sentimen lokal yang penuh kepahitan, terutama sebagai akibat penindasan Jepang, (3) meledaknya kemarahan sebagai penderitaan rakyat, dan (4) pentingnya peranan guru-guru agama.

The main purpose of this paper is to discuss some aspects of the *Peristiwa Tiga Daerah* (The Three Regions Affair) which took place in the Pekalongan Residency, Central Java, during the first four months after the declaration of Indonesian Independence (from September to December 1945) and to give some clarifications of that local event within the national context. To understand the nature of the affair it is necessary to place it in the framework of social change and political deprivation at that time. It is also necessary to identify the elements which provided the basis for social action. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand its organization, idiologies, leadership, followers and channels of action.

Basically, The Tiga Daerah Affair is one of the social revolutions, that is a local social response to the Proclamation of the Indonesian Independence (Anderson, 1972, Kahin, 1955). It was manifested in the spontaneous radical social action, as shown in the Pekalongan Residency, especially in the three regencies of Tegal, Brebes and Pemalang, from which the name of the affair has its origin. The Proclamation was the breakdown of the colonial regime, which was soon followed by the feeling of emptiness in political and social life. The Republic of Indonesia was still in the early process of its emergence. (We are, then, dealing with a society in transition with its accompanying social disorganization and unrest). As a national message the Proclamation spread throughout the region through variety of channels, it was perceived by different groups

of people in divergent ways. Consequently, it offered stimulus to members of the social system and created responses in the form of attitudinal and behaviour at changes.

The acceptance and the intepretation of the Proclamation by the local people in the most part was coloured by their experiences, understandings social environment and status. In this case Independence was highly valued and was interpreted not only as being free from colonialism and the breakdown of the Japanese regime, but also free from oppression, exploitation and corruption. It seems also to be interpreted as being free to do anything, and free to change what was considered as being old and tainted by colonialism. It is no wonder that the local people faced with the situation, not only acted rationally but in the most cases emotionally as well. The Proclamation was seen as the beginning of a better life, free from poverty, and insecurity. The mixture of the objective factors and subjective elements in the three regions created spontaneous responses which took the forms of social unrest. This was manifested in demonstrations, accompanied by violence, disorder, riots, commotions and disturbances. It tended to express a collective behaviour, guided by various beliefs, and was directed to the immediate causes of peolples' sufferings, which were personified by local officials.

Like all social revolutions the Tiga Daerah Affair was a complex and multifaceted phenomenon and appeared in a variety of manifestations. Several prominent features of this affair can be seen in (1) its political character; (2) its aggresive attitude toward the bureaucratic elite, especially the *priyayi* or *pangreh praja* (the Dutch trained officers) and the establishment; (3) its anti-foreign attitude, especially to the Dutch and the Japanese; (4) its many groups; (5) its revengeful character; and (6) its religious overtone. It will be apparent from the events outlined below that it is not easy to separate the disturbances from the aspects of ideological-political conflict on the one hand, and that of social discontents on the other hand.

**The social setting.** The Pekalongan Residency is located in the western part of the north coast of Central Java. It consists of five Regencies, i.e. to the west Brebes, Tegal, Pemalang — which were involved directly in the affair — and Pekalongan and Batang to the east. In the 17th century, the region belonged to the Mataram Kingdom, known at the times as the *Daerah Pesisir Kulon* (the Western Coastal Region). It can be divided into two markedly different parts. The southern part, the hinterland, is predominantly an agricultural area, and the northern part is occupied by a chain of seaport-towns, where trading and industrial communities are found. These towns also serve as the administrative, commercial, industrial, educational and political centers for each regency, as well as for the religious organizations. In addition, the coastal strip is a long range of fishing villages. Since by the end of the last century, parts of the wet-rice land have been used as sugar cane plantations, operated by western companies in rotation. The urban and rural areas are linked through the government system, the economic

network, and political and religious organizations. Although in general the villagers are rice farmers, some of them are engaged in trading, fishing and manufacturing activities.

Because of its accessability from many directions, contacts of the people of this region with the outer world were and are quite frequent. It is therefore, tied to the hinterland of Java only losely. This openness gives its impacts on the social and cultural lives in the region. Two major cultural elements can be differentiated in the region. First, the Javanese cultural element resulted from its relationship to the Mataram Kingdom, and second, the Islamic cultural elements, provided by its relationship with the two centers of Islam, Demak and Cirebon. These cultural elements were integrated into the form of the *Pasisir* Culture (Pegeaud, 1938) with its prominent feature of *santri* civilization. It is concertrated around the *pesantren,* traditional rural Islamic schools, which are spread over the region from Brebes to Pekalongan. Usually, these pesantrens have connections with those of in the Cirebon region and East Java. In this cultural setting, the religious leader has a prominent position.

The impact of the intensification of colonial policies, since the 19th century, brought several changes in political and socio-economical systems. The introduction of the sugar cane plantations, operated by western enterprise (Geertz, 1966: 71-80), compulsory services, consisting mainly of labour on public works or *herrendiensten* on local projects and desa *dienstens,* and the land tax system were heavy burdens to the villagers.

Increasing landlessness, taxations, and other economic burdens forced people to work in the sugar cane factory or in other industries. During this time one can observe a process of the proletarization of the rural areas and the beginning of urbanization.

Social burdens were increased during the Japanese Occupation. Villagers were obliged to deliver *padi* (rice) to the government through their village and Sub-District heads and were forced to cultivate castor-oil plants (*jarak*). Besides these duties many were obliged to became Romusha-forced labour on local projects or in other regions in Indonesia. Some were even sent abroad. Scarce foodstuffs were distributed at official prices among the urban population. These practices were nothing less than a harsh exploitation of the peasantry which resulted in the increasing poverty scarcity of cloth and foodstuffs, famine or starvation.

At the same time, there were many local youth and people recruited by the Japanese to the various youth organizations, such as *Peta* (Pembela Tanah Air or the Defence of the Fatherland), *Heiho* (Corps for the Japanese Army), *Barisan Pelopor* (Pioneer Corps), Tonari Gumi (The Neighbourhood Associations). The *Hisbu'llah* (Allah' Army) in some places, like in Pekalongan and Tegal, was also fonded. Some *Kyais* or *Ulamas,* were recruited and sent to Jakarta for training courses. These organizations and trainings were very important for they gave the local pemuda and Kyai some military training and provided a

meeting place between them and the national leaders. This contact gave then the opportunity to look at the local problems within the national framework.

The Japanese Occupation was a period of extreme suffering which gave birth to social discontent and grievances.

**The Events.** The announcement of the Proclamation was received by the local people through several channels, especially through radio, telegraph, telephones or inter-personal relationship. The news were first heard by those who had radios or lived near radios, placed by the local government in key places in the towns, and those who worked in the post and telegraph offices and the railways. Afterward it spread to regions outside the towns. The rural people received the news personally in the markets, or from their leaders who had a relationship with the urban people. The first to react were the *pemudas* (the youth) and local intellectual groups. In a short time they started what was called *gerakan aksi serentak* (spontaneous actions), to haul down the Japanese flag and raise the *Sang merah-putih* (the red-white flag). These actions were usually followed by processions around the towns carrying the red-white flag with yelling and shouting: *"Merdeka, Merdeka!"* (*"freedom, freedom"*). This took place for the first time on 20 August 1945, when a large group of pemudas in Brebes hauled down the Japanese flag and the *merah-putih* was hoisted at the Kabupaten and other offices. Similar actions occured in Tegal, Pemalang and Pekalongan. These spontaneous actions also spread to the sub-district regions even to the villages, accompanied by a wave of enthusiasm, in the their Kabupaten.

At the end of August, the KNI (*Komite Nasional Indonesia* or the Indonesian National Committee) was established in Pekalongan. The formations of local KNI's was soon followed by other *Kabupaten* and down to the district levels, in Tegal, Brebes and Pemalang. For some time the local *KNI* acted as the real administrative power in region. The *Badan Pekerja* (the Working Commiittee) of the KNI was formed at the local level in November 1945.

In the meantime several youth organizations were formed. In addition to the *Hisbullah,* which had already in existence since the Japanese period, *AMRI* (*Angkatan Muda Republik Indonesia* or Young Generation of the Republic of Indonesia), and *API* (*Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia* or Indonesian Youth Generation), and Angkatan Muda Kereta Api (Young Railroad Worker) were organized. The AMRI was particularly strong in some parts of Tegal (i.e. Slawi). The API had its branches, perhaps, more correct, its affiliations, in parts of Tegal and Pemalang. The *Barisan Pelopor* was strong in parts of Tegal and Brebes, while Hisbullah was dominant in Pekalongan, espesially in Pekajangan, a strong basis of the Islamic group. Outside these organizations, there were some local organizations of gang or *"gerombolan"* of bandits, in Talang (situated between Tegal and Slawi) and operated in several villages. These youth organizations were the prime movers of the spontaneous actions.

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Although in the critical situation, the pemuda seems to be willing to follow the directions of the central government, they were more prone to radical and revolutionairy actions. On the other hand, the *pangreh praja* (administrative official) group was very slow and unresponsive. Consequently the group was suspected, the officials were even marked as anti-Proclamation or anti-Republic. They were sometimes accused of being the spys of the Dutch or *"kaki tangan NICA"* (Dutch civil administrations). The passive attitude of the *pangreh praja* was apparent when the youth hauled down the Rising Sun flag and hoisted the Red-White, and then they tried to disarm the Japanese troops. They could not carry out their functions properly in these tense situation.

The actions to disarms the Japanese troops took place in Brebes, Tegal and Pekalongan at different times over the same period. Usually, a large number of pemuda, on a certain day, marched to the Japanese barrack. After some clashes Japanese soldiers surrendered their weapons, which were given to the mayor of the town. The mayor handed them over to the ex-Peta pemuda. This was what took place in Tegal, where one pemuda was killed and two wounded. Another bloody encounter occured between pemuda and *Kempei tai* (Military Police) in Pekalongan on 3 October 1945. This accident flared up after the attempt to negotiate the transfer of arms failed. 37 pemuda were killed [6]. Situation became more critical. The differences of opinion and attitude between pemudas and *pangreh praja* created a conflict situation, which resulted the emergence of the *aksi pendaulatan* (the replacement actions) to the *pangreh praja.*

Widespread bitterness was the significant feanture that accompanied the *daulat* action. A great number of officials, *Bupati* (the Regent), *Wedana* (the Head of District), *Camat* (the Head of Sub-District), *Lurah* (the Village Head) and others, were the main targets of the hostility. Some were killed, kidnapped or put to jail. Hostility was also directed to foreigners, the Dutch and the Japanese.

It is important to note that during the Japanese period the officials were assigned to recruit Romusha, to collect the forced *padi* delivery, and to accumulate and distribute the foodstuffs or cloth. The issue of compulsory services, *jarak* cultivation, *padi* delivery were capable of stirring popular feeling.

The *daulat* actions seem to follow a similar pattern. A large numbers of people marched to the house of the official to arrest him. Sometimes, he was forced to march around the town and became the target of insult or humiliation of the people. He was then 'tried' by the mass of the people. New official was chosen directly afterwards. The most sensational disturbances took place in the *Kabupaten* of Tegal, Brebes and Pemalang. In these regions *daulat* actions claimed many victims. They were accompained by murder and kidnaping. In early October, several *lurah* were killed, many houses and storehouses were plundered and burned in the Southern part of Tegal [2] In early November 1945, the unrest spread to the town and to all over villages in the district. Disturbances

started around sugar cane factories of Slawi and Pangkah. In Slawi a number of Dutch and Eurasian personnel and their families, of the sugar cane factories were killed on 11 October 1945.[8] A few days earlier (8-9 October 1945) a band of rioters marched to the house of the Head of Sub-district of Adiwerna. He was caught and brought to the office, where he was tried by the people. He was "sentenced" to death. The *Camat* of Lebaksiu was also killed. The *daulat* action spread to all over the region of the Pekalongan Residency, including the sub-district and village areas.

Meanwhile, in Talang, south of Tegal, Kutil, an ex-barber, began to act as an *algojo* (a executioner). He was, perhaps, a leader of the *"gerombolan"* (gang) of bandits band of Talang who called themself as *Pemuda Istimewa* (the Extraordinary Youth). His name was involved in several murders. It was said that his group wanted to kill officials who were thought to be *mata-mata Nica* (spys of the Dutch).

On 4 November 1945, a mass demonstration marched from the southern part of Tegal to town, Tegal.[3] It was said that while ccarying *bambu-runcing* (bamboo-spears) and *golok*, they shouted: *"Alla-hu Akbar", Alla-hu Akbar"*, ("God is most great, God is most great") and *"La ila-ha illallah, La ila-ha illallah"*. (There is no other God, but Allah). Their main targets of were Government officials. They failed to meet the Bupati (R. Soenarjo), who managed to escape. But they found Bupati's wife and her mother (Kardinah, a sister of R. A. Kartini) and took them. Forcing them to wear *karung goni*, they took them around the town and made them, as targets of humilition and insult. Afterwards, they were brought to Adiwerna, where they were, together with other officials, kept as prisoners. Some of the people who were killed during this period of disturbances were M. M. Singgih (a public prosecutor), Abubakar (a lawyer), Mardjono, H. Much. Ichsan. A religious leader from Pacul village Kijai Abu Sudjai was appointed as Bupati of Tegal.

As in Tegal, the *daulat* action also took place in the southern part of Brebes. Some village heads were dismissed and others were killed. Several Dutchmen, who lived in the sugar cane factory at Jatibarang, were killed by group of rioters. In Pemalang, the *daulat* actions began in the southern part, in the Sub-District of Moga. From there the riots spread to Randudongkal. Some villages and Sub-District heads were replaced. Then the disturbances moved noisily to the town. The Bupati and other officials were arrested, and one official was killed.

In this chaotic vacuum of power, the *Badan Pekerja Tiga Daerah* (the Working Committee of the Three Regencies) was formed. Centered in Tegal the committee consisted of leaders from Pemalang, Tegal and Brebes. The Tegal chapter of *Badan Pekerja* was composed of nine members. Three of them were ex-Digulists who were exiled by the Dutch to Digul during the colonial period for their political activities, included Muh. Nuh (the Chairman of the *Barisan Pelopor*). It is interesting to note that during the formation

of the Working Committee there was a mysterious figure, known as Kamidjaja, who attended several meetings. He claimed to be the representative of the central government, sent to establish Working Committees in the local areas. Some people thought he was a folower of Amir Sjarifudin, since Sajuti Melik was sent officially by the central government to observe the elections of new officials.

Under the control of the working Committee several new officials were chosen. Several officials, such as Sarimin Reksodihardjo (the *Bupati* of Brebes), Palal Pranoto (*Patih* of Brebes). Slamet (*Wedana* of Tanjung), Soedirman Danoewilogo (*Wedono* of Brebes) and a number of officials from Tegal and others, had by that time been kidnapped and kept prisoners near Lebaksiu (the southern part of Tegal).[15] Kutil, the algojo, was appointed as the head of police at Tegal.

In Brebes the replacement of officials was carried out under the leadership of Kartohargo, the local nationalist, who was the chairman of the KNI. He was also a member of local Badan Pekerja and a Brebes representative in the *Badan Pekerja Tiga Daerah*. Kyai H. Syatori was appointed as the Bupati of Brebes and R. Supangat, a paramedic of the local hospital, was chosen as the Bupati of Pemalang.

The final action of the Working Committee was to replace the Resident of Pekalongan. The previous Resident, Mr. Besar, had left Pekalongan, and R. Suprapto, also abandined the town, who temporarily replaced him, Sardjijo, from Purworejo, a farmer member of *Shu Sangi-kai* (Advisory Council of the Resident) in Kedu, was appointed as Resident. He was chosen at the meeting, held in Pemalang, between the *Tiga Daerah* and the representative of Pekalongan. The meeting agreed to the demands of the *Badan Pekerja Tiga Daerah*. On the other hand, the *pemuda* group of Pekalongan, dominated by the Muslim group, opposed the replacement. [6] On 11 December 1945. The *Tiga Daerah* with its staff came to Pekalongan. Three and half days later, Sardjijo and Kamidjaja, on the way to the meeting at Kedungwangi, were assaulted by the Muslim group at Pekajangan. Sardjijo was unhurt, but Kamidjaja was wounded. In that afternoon, on returning to the town, they were put in jail by the army.[7] The Hisbullah troops together with the TKR (*Tentara Keamanan Rakyat* or People's Peace Preservation Army) troops had began their attacks on the three Regencies of Pemalang, Tegal and Brebes and freed those who were arrested during the *Tiga Daerah*. Most of those who were involved in the *Tiga Daerah* affairs were put to a jail in Pekalongan. Thirty two persons were sent to Yogyakarta on December 1946, and six of the them finally were tried by a court in Pekalongan, in April 1947; while the rest were freed. [8] Among the six were Kartohargo, Kamidjaja, Muh. Nuh, Amir, and Tan Djiem Kwan. Besides these Kutil was tried and was sentenced to death.

A number of officials, who were appointed during the affair, mostly religious leaders, continued in their positions. They were Kyai Abu Sudjai, the Bupati of Tegal, Kyai H. Syatori, the Bupati of Brebes, Kyai H. Fachruri, the Wedana of Slawi, Kyai H. Toha,

the Camat of Lebaksiu, Kyai H. Syirad, the Camat of Magersari, Kyai H. Zainudin, the Camat of Tarub and H. Mawardi, the Wedana of Adiwerna. While Kyai H. Makmur was appointed as the Bupati Pamalang replacing R. Supangat, who was arrested. Wali Alfatah was appointed as the Resident of Pekalongan.

**Some comments on the Leadership, organizzation and ideology.** It is difficult to classify the ideological bases of the *Tiga Daerah* Affair. Because of its complexity and multivarious elements it can only be identified by looking at its leadership, organization and the ties of local leaders to national figures or groups. Basically, there were four groups of leaders, whose ideological orientations can be identified. Firstly, the *pemuda* group, who belonged to several youth organizations. They were mostly educated and lived in urban areas. In some cases they had connections with national figures, especially with those who lived in Jakarta. Secondly, the ex-Digulist group. This group was particularly prominent during the formation of the *Badan Pekerja Tiga Daerah*. Muh. Nuh and Kartohargo were some of the important figures in the group. Kamidjaja, a follower of Amir Sjarifudin, was very influential in this group. But the ties of this group with other areas is not clear. Kamidjaja and a small group of local ex-Digulists, can be called the activist radical group, who used the social atmosphere after the Proclamation and the spontaneous reaction of the mass people, especially the pemuda in their efforts, to replace the local officials. In addition there were followers of Sjahrir and Soebagio (Pendidikan Nasional) among the group.

Thirdly, leaders of the Muslim group. The Islamic ideology seems to be very obvious in the affair. Religious beliefs helped to give the group a certain degree of unity and provided the character of the leadership. Naturally, there were several groups Muslim in this regions i.e. the Muhammadiyah, who dominated Pekalongan, and some places in Tegal, the PSII (*Partai Sarikat Islam Indonesia*), with its leaders, such as like Kyai Abu Sudjai, and some Pesantren leaders.

Finally, there was the criminal group or "Gerombolan" the best known was from Talang of which Kutil was one of the promment leaders. Criminal elements in the affair were particularly rampant in rural areas. Acts of violence and riots, especially in the forms of plundering, murder and burning, were carried out by this group.

**Conclusion.** From an examination of the event it can be said that *The Tiga Daerah* Affair was a reflection of social response to the uncertain situation created by the Proclamation. This affair contained both common features of the early Indonesian Revolution, and the characteristic features of a local affair. The common features are: (1) the role of pemuda in carrying out social change; (2) the tension between two social classes of different environment, experiences and aspirations; (3) the lack of communication between the central and local governments, region and region, group and group. The characteristic features differed from other social revo-

lutions in this affair, i.e. 1) the *daulat* action against the *pangreh praja* group; 2) the specific character of local sentiment; 3) people's grievances and 4) the role of religious leaders.

1. Interview with Tjitrosatmoko, Kyai Fachruri and another figures in Tegal, in December 1972.
   See, *Buku Kenang-kenangan Pembangunan Monumen Pahlawan Pekalongan,* published by Panitya Pembangunan Tugu Pahlawan 3 October 1945.
2. In *Bijl. Nefis Periodies,* No. 2, 4 Maart 1946, *Proc. General* 36, it said that the unrest occured in the end of September 1945. But in my opinion it did not occur until early October 1945.
3. *Ibid.*
   See, Suprapto, *Tegal dari Masa ke Masa* (Kementerian P.P. dan K., 1959), p. 62.
4. Interview with several figures in Tegal, Brebes, Pemalang and Pekalongan, in December 1972.
5. Memoir written by Soedirman Danoewilogo (ex. Wedana of Brebes), unpublished source.
6. Interview with some figures in Pekalongan in December 1972.
7. *Ibid.,* especially with Sutarto at Pekajangan.
8. See, *Antara, Dalam Negeri,* 27/3/1947, p. 1, item 2; and see also *Antara, Dalam Negeri,* 19/3/1947, p. 12, item 23;

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